

A Brief History of Tarves Parish by Arthur Watson (thought to be written around 1991)

There is some evidence to show that Tarves has been inhabited for about 4000 years. Parish boundaries, as we know them today, go back to tribal times – with, no doubt, some changes over the centuries.

One of the earliest references to Tarves as a Parish is in 1207 when King William gave the tiends and patronage of the Parish to Arbroath Abbey.

The first Christian Missionary to this area was St Ninian who established a Chapel in the Parish of Methlick around 400AD. About 600AD St Murdebar, an Irish priest, established a Chapel in Tarves and is recognised as the patron of Tarves Church (see Church Tapestries).

The land between the rivers Ythan and Don became known as Formartine and, following the re-organisation of Local Government in 1974 the name Formartine has been used for two of the electoral wards, Tarves along with Methlick. Oldmeldrum is in the East Garioch ward.

There is very little written recorded history of these far off centuries and it is the end of the 16th century before we start to get reliable records.

The Reformation of the Church took place over a period of years. By 1597 the Roman Catholic priests were evicted from their churches in this area and a Presbytery of the New Church of Scotland was set up in Ellon for Ellon and surrounding Parishes. It is from these records that we get brief but accurate details of happenings in Tarves in these and subsequent years.

In 1696 The Poll Book of Aberdeenshire came out. This listed all the people in all the Parishes liable to pay a Poll Tax, and tells us something about the shopkeepers, shoemakers, the weavers, the farmers and crofts etc., the Lairds and Estates of Haddo, Tolquhon, Schivas. We are lucky in Tarves to have a copy of this book. I understand that tax was as

unpopular as the recent one imposed here, and as difficult to collect. The total tax for Tarves was £514.

Except for those who went off to fight in wars, contact with the outside world was very limited. Nearly all the food was produced within the Parish to support a population greater than it is today. The first population return was in 1755 and gave Tarves a population of 2346. Today it is approximately 2000. We await the most recent Census returns.

The revolution in agriculture started 200 years ago with the clearing of the land of stones – building the dykes we see today – the land drained – the farm and cottar houses built and the census of 1881 gives our population as 2558, its highest ever.

This century has seen a steady decline in numbers due to emigration to all parts of the British Empire, the United States and indeed to all corners of the world. The years following the second world war saw a dramatic advance in labour saving machinery on our farms resulting in a great drift of people off the land and the population figure for 1971 is given at 1448, its lowest recorded figure.

In 1951 South Ythsie had 7 workers, North Ythsie has 12 workers. Giving a total Population of approximately 70 people. (?? Typed as written) How many today?

Thirty years ago the Parish of Tarves had 4 schools.

	Pupils 1895	Pupils 1991
Tarves	164	172
Barthol Chapel	80	33
Auchedly	40	Closed
Craigdam	70	Closed

Churches Tarves
Barthol Chapel
Craigdam – closed and demolished 1988

Melvin Hall opened 1875
Church Youth Hall opened 1958

1894 First proper water and sewerage system. Metal water taps (see bakery photo) were set up at the bakery, butcher's shop, the Square and Kirkbrae

1892 An Andrew Carnegie Library Room was built on to the Melvin Hall

1897 The Queens Room was built on to the Melvin Hall as part of the Queen Victoria Diamond Jubilee celebrations.

1895 First street lamps (paraffin)

1894 The first telegraph system arrived in Tarves and was set up in the Post Office and chemist shop – now where Dr Stephen lives (in Kirkbrae across from war memorial)

1836 School and schoolhouse built in the Square

1911 Present school on Duthie Road built

1974 Building of Stephen's Estate commenced.

(signed) Arthur Watson